

Story 2006 (1969 Tapes 15-16)

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The Shepherd Who Married a Princess But Became Padishah of Another Country

One day a shepherd was driving his flock of sheep and goats to the pasture. As he moved along with his flock, the shepherd was stopped by an old dervish who said to him, “My boy, give up your job as shepherd. You would do much better if you were to ask for the hand of the padishah’s daughter in marriage. Going to the palace and marrying the padishah’s daughter is the only way in which you will ever become wealthy.”

“Very well,” said the shepherd. “I shall do that.” He gave his flock of sheep and goats to the dervish and started walking to the palace of the padishah.

When he arrived there, he saw in the garden alongside the palace a mounting stone. Any man who wished to marry the

¹ Athletic young people might spring into their saddles without assistance, but older people often needed a step between the ground and the horse’s back in order to mount. The Turkish expression for a mounting stone is binek taş.

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padishah's daughter was supposed to sit upon that mounting stone.² That was the only way in which one could propose to the princess. Whenever a man sat there, the princess would come forth from the palace and challenge him to a contest in composing verses and rimes. She was very skillful in creating poetry, and until then she had defeated every young man who had competed with her. When the suitor lost in such a contest, he was beheaded by the royal executioners.

It was quite early in the morning when the shepherd arrived and sat upon the mounting stone. A servant of the princess was the first one to see him sitting there. That servant girl's name was Akçakız.³ Akçakız went at once to the room of the princess, opened the door, and said, "Lady, there is a young man sitting upon the mounting stone." She then went outside to fill a water container at the fountain in the garden.

²This particular mounting stone also constitutes a message in symbolic language, a frequent means of communication in Turkish tales and an occasional means in Turkish real life. See Walker's and Uysal's Tales Alive in Turkey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 269.

³Akçakız means pale girl. The narrator gives the name a regional pronunciation: Ağcakız.

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Keloğlan,⁴ the former shepherd, saw the girl coming and composed a verse⁵ for her. He said,

Don't they call you Akçakız?

If you wish to know, my name

Is Son of Hamza, Keloğlan.

The servant was amazed. She said to herself, "He called me by my correct name! He knew that my name is Akçakız!" She rushed back into the palace and said, "Lady! Lady, look out of the window at the young man sitting on the mounting stone. He seems to have no defects. He must be very clever, for he somehow knew my name and composed a verse for me."

⁴The word keloğlan means bald boy, but the baldness is not that caused by aging. It is caused by ringworm infestation of the scalp. This disease often strikes the younger and perhaps improperly tended younger children of large peasant families. It is encouraged by uncleanliness. In folktales the keloğlan is a definite personality type, a winner, and a sympathetic figure. In tales the keloğlan image is often used as a disguise. Disguisers hide their hair by covering it either with a sheepskin turned inside out or with the cleaned lining of a sheep's stomach.

⁵Turkish verse is rimed. Because Turkish is (1) an inflected language with (2) patterns of vowel harmony and (3) series of voiced and voiceless consonants, it is more conducive to rime than is English. Although we have sought to retain meter, we have avoided the inevitably forced rimes that would occur. The translation is entirely literal, and so anyone who insists on end rimes may create his or her own.

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The princess went out into the garden and sang a song to Keloğlan, who, in turn, sang one back to the princess, whose name was Güldalı.⁶ They continued to exchange verses in this way for a long while until finally Keloğlan won the contest. Keloğlan then said,

You are my partridge, red-legged one,⁷

And I should be your falcon soon.

Receive me from my lonely flight.

Your bosom now should be my nest.

When the girl heard Keloğlan's last verse, she called her attendants and said to them, "He has won the contest. He sang better songs than I did, and I shall now accept his proposal. I must have been destined by Allah to marry him! Take him to the bathhouse and give him the best soaps and perfumes to use. After that, take him to a tailor to be fitted with good clothes. Then go and tell my father that he should make arrangements for my marriage."

The attendants followed the directions of the princess exactly. After having Keloğlan bathed and fitted with good clothes, they presented the young man to the padishah and repeated his daughter's

⁶In Turkish güldalı means rose branch.

⁷Many a partridge (Turkish keklik) does have red legs. Turks are sometimes sentimental about partridges. A favorite Turkish folk dance is called Keklik Oyunu.

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request concerning her marriage. The padishah looked at Keloğlan, and he liked what he saw. He accepted the engagement of the couple and ordered that a wedding celebration should begin at once. Soon after that, Keloğlan and Güldalı were married with the will of Allah.⁸

Keloğlan then began to live very comfortably in the palace with his new wife. One Friday the padishah sent a message to Keloğlan saying that he wished to have his son-in-law go to the mosque with him to attend the noon service.⁹ Keloğlan walked right behind the ruler, who was leading a large number of worshipers to the mosque. [Tape 16 begins here.] There had already begun to be widespread gossip about the marriage of the princess to Keloğlan. People grumbled about this even as they were walking to the mosque, and the ruler could not help hearing some of their comments. One man said, "Just

⁸When a matchmaker approaches the parents of a girl with a proposal of marriage from the parents of an eligible boy, that envoy always says that the union will be made "with the will of Allah and the permission of the Prophet [Mohammed]." Inasmuch as one can only assume such divine approval, the statement is apparently made in the optative subjunctive mood. The narrator here seems to be making a passing gesture to that verbal convention.

⁹The Muslim sabbath falls on Friday, and the Friday noon service is considered the religious high point of the week. In Turkey Sunday is now the day when business and government offices close, but faithful Muslims still regard Friday as the sabbath.

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look at that bald fellow! How could our padishah allow his daughter to marry such a person?" Others made similar remarks.

This dissatisfaction of his people bothered the padishah greatly. After the prayer service had ended, he said to Keloğlan, "Son, you married my daughter with my consent, but unfortunately my subjects have not accepted that marriage. It is going to be necessary for you to take your wife to your own country and live there."

Keloğlan returned at once to the palace and said to his wife, "Güldalı, your father is forcing us to leave. He does not want us to live here in the palace any longer. Collect all of your belongings and get ready to leave as soon as possible." They filled their bags with gold and other valuable things. Then after Güldalı had dressed in one of her father's suits so that she would look like a man, they went to the royal stables and selected two good horses for their trip. They then set out on their journey.

After riding a long way, they came to a pasture, where Güldalı reined in her horse and said to her husband, "I must rest for awhile." After they had tied their horses in some bushes, Güldalı said to Keloğlan, "I shall put my head in your lap and sleep for a short time. If anyone comes along and asks who we are, tell them that I am your master and you are my slave." She then lay upon the grass, placed her head in Keloğlan's lap, and fell asleep.

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After awhile an old dervish came along and asked Keloğlan, “Who is sleeping with his head in your lap?”

“He is my master, and I am his slave,” answered Keloğlan.

The dervish then stroked Keloğlan’s face and said, “May your face become as handsome as that of Prophet Joseph.¹⁰ May you never be defeated or lose your strength. And may you in time come to have your own slaves and servants.” The dervish then disappeared.

When GÜldalı woke up from her nap and looked at her husband, she was shocked by what she saw. Her head was now in the lap of an exceedingly handsome man. She shouted, “O my Allah, what has happened? Where is my husband? How could I have slept in the lap of a total stranger? I must kill myself!”

Keloğlan grabbed her wrist and said, “Stop! You shall not kill yourself! Allow me to tell you what has happened. While you were asleep, an old dervish came along and asked who we were. I gave him the answer that you had directed me to give to anyone who asked who we were. He then stroked my face and said, ‘May you have as

¹⁰The reference here is to the Old Testament Joseph, son of Jacob. His handsomeness is especially emphasized in the Biblical story of Zulayka, Potiphar’s wife. Numerous versions of that story are extant in the oral traditions of Turkey and several other countries. Variants can be found in the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative.

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handsome a face as that of Joseph and may you have both health and wealth.’’

After Gldalı understood what had happened, they continued on their journey and rode hard all day. When evening came, they found themselves in wild and unsettled country, and so they decided to sleep on their horses instead of on the ground. But during the night the horses wandered in search of grass to eat, and the two went in different directions. When morning came, the two travelers were widely separated, Kelođlan at the foot of one mountain and Gldalı at the foot of another.

When Gldalı awakened and found that her husband was gone and she was alone, she began to examine the area where she found herself. After awhile she saw a man cutting wood in the forest. When Gldalı, still dressed in male clothes, saw the woodcutter, she began shouting loudly, ‘‘Âşık Kerem! Âşık Kerem!’’¹¹

‘‘Stop shouting,’’ said the woodcutter. ‘‘This is a mountainside, not a coffeehouse! What would Âşık Kerem be doing here? You should

¹¹An âşık is a Turkish folk poet and minstrel. There was a noted Âşık Kerem in the 16th century. He himself subsequently became the male lead in Kerem and Aslı, a folk romance that was in the repertoire of many a minstrel. The use of his name here seems to be merely capriciousness on the part of Gldalı.

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look for him in some coffeehouse in a town where he will be singing and playing upon his saz.”¹²

“Why do you interfere with what is my business?” asked Güldalı. She then sprang from her horse and slapped the face of the woodcutter. Then, remounting her horse, she continued on her way. After riding a considerable distance, she came at evening to a small house.

When Güldalı knocked on the door of that house, an old woman appeared and asked, “What do you want?”

“I have ridden a long distance today, and I am very tired. Will you accept me as a guest in your house for the night?”

“No, no, I cannot do that,” said the old woman. “My house is too small to allow me to accept you here.” But when Güldalı offered her some gold, the old woman agreed to house her for the night.

When darkness fell upon the land, Güldalı heard outside the sound of music. She asked, “What is going on out there?”

The old woman answered, “There is in progress a wedding party for the daughter of the seller of oxen.”

Still disguised in male clothing, Güldalı asked, “Will men be permitted to attend that party?”

¹²A three-stringed, lutelike instrument on which folk poets and minstrels accompany their singing.

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“Yes, everyone will be there. Let us go there ourselves,” said the old woman. She locked the door and then led Güldalı toward the house from which the music was coming. When they reached that house, the old woman opened the door without knocking and gestured to Güldalı to enter. To Güldalı’s surprise, there was no party or bride or groom inside but only a woman who appeared to be a prostitute. “Come on in,” said the old woman. “We shall have a good time here.”

By now Güldalı was beginning to feel very suspicious about this situation and warned herself to be very careful. The rakish-looking woman opened a bottle of rakı¹³ and poured some of that liquor into two glasses. She offered one to Güldalı, who took the glass but threw away the contents. The hostess continued drinking rakı until she had finished the bottle, and by that time she was completely drunk. Güldalı then took a poker from the fireplace and stabbed to death the drunken woman. She said, “This evil woman was trying to kill me, but I have killed her instead. She deserved to die!” Güldalı then decided to leave that place at once, but this she was unable to do, for she discovered that the door was locked. It took several minutes for her to break open the door.

¹³The favorite liquor of Turkey. It has an anise flavor. When mixed with water, rakı becomes white and is referred to as “lion’s milk.” The same liquor is known in Arab lands as arrack and in Balkan countries as uzu.

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In the meantime the old woman had returned to her own home. There she searched Gldalı's traveling bag and found that it contained much gold. She was delighted by this, for, thinking that Gldalı was already dead, she planned to use that money to buy a better house. But while her hand was still in the bag, she was interrupted by the arrival of its owner. "Grandmother, what are you doing there?" asked Gldalı.

"Nothing," answered the old woman.

But Gldalı knew better than that, and she prepared to leave that house even though it was now the middle of the night. As she left, she said to the old woman, "After I have gone, another young man may come along. If one does, you should not deceive him as you deceived me. I was lucky to escape." She then leapt on her horse and rode away.

After she had ridden some distance, Gldalı saw ahead of her a large tent. It belonged to the padishah of that land, but she did not know that. The padishah had just died, but before his death, he had said to his followers, "When I have died, I want the first person who comes along and enters this tent to be crowned your new ruler. This is my last wish."

When Gldalı opened the front flap of that tent, she heard a shouting behind her. Those who were preparing the corpse for burial shouted, "A young man has just arrived to be our new padishah!" Then

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turning to Gldalı, who was confused by what she had just heard, they explained the situation. "Before our padishah died, he ordered that the first person to come along and enter this tent should be crowned the new padishah." In that strange way, the daughter of a padishah became a padishah herself.

But even though she had all of the power of a padishah, Gldalı was still unable to find her husband, Kelođlan. She had a small tomb built and had a picture of herself in male clothing placed upon it. Then she had watchmen guard it day and night. She ordered that any persons who visited that tomb should be arrested and held in jail until she had talked with them. A few days later a woodcutter came along, stopped at the tomb, and gazed at the picture. He said, "Young man, you once slapped my face, but when you arrived here, you died. I forgive you for what you did." The guards arrested him and put him in jail.

Then one day the old woman came to the tomb and looked at the picture hanging on it. She said, "Oh, my son, you visited my house, where I treated you like my own son. When you reached this place, alas, you died." The guards then led her away to the jail.

Next the prostitute appeared at the tomb. When she saw the picture, she spoke to it. She said, "You injured me very seriously, and

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you thought that you had killed me. But I am still alive, and you have died.” She too was taken to jail.

A week later Keloğlan discovered the tomb. When he saw the picture on it, he broke down and cried. He said, “I have searched everywhere for you, but I could not find you until now, when you are dead. I cannot live without you, and so I shall now kill myself!” He took out a knife, but he was prevented from stabbing himself by the guards.

They seized him quickly and said, “Stop! Stop! We shall take you at once to our padishah!”

The guards took him to GÜldalı, who was delighted to see her husband again. She said, “You have finally found me! From now on, you shall be padishah here, and I shall be in charge of the harem section of the palace.”

She then ordered the guards to bring to her from the jail those other people who had visited the tomb. They brought the woodcutter, the old woman, and the prostitute. She said to the old woman and the prostitute, “You are both evil women.” She then ordered her executioners to kill both women. Turning to the old woodcutter, she said, “I injured you in my anger, but the goodness of your heart led you to forgive me. You must be rewarded for that. Take this bag of gold and use it to lead a more comfortable life.”

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After that, she and Keloğlan, now the padishah, lived happily together